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Local News

United We Roll protest: Truck convoy ends Hill rally, gears up for Day 2

Taylor Blewett

Feb 20, 2019 • February 21, 2019 • 5 minute read •  Join the conversation

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Hundreds of Pro-pipeline supporters arrived Alberta and other parts of the country in to protest against the Liberal government on Parliament Hill in Ottawa Tuesday Feb 19, 2019. Anti-pipeline supporters screaming at the Pro-pipeline supporters. PHOTO BY TONY CALDWELL

Both morning and afternoon commuters in the capital were spared traffic snarls from a United We Roll truck convoy protest Tuesday but there's no word yet on Wednesday's way to work.

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Ottawa police Sgt. Mark Gatien, who had been with the convoy of truckers all day, reported just after 1:30 p.m. Tuesday that “all drivers (are) heading back to their trucks.

When asked where the truckers were going, Gatien said: “I do know but for security reasons cannot say quite yet.”

The city's traffic centre at 2:55 p.m. lifted its warning of road closures on Wellington Street between Elgin and O'Connor streets.

Several hundred people, about half of them garbed in yellow vests, rallied on Parliament Hill from about 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. The protest is expected to jam up traffic downtown for two days but after a late start, the convoy didn't arrive on Wellington Street until after a morning rush hour in which motorists and bus riders had been warned to expect delays.

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United We Roll left Red Deer, Alta., on Valentine's Day, intent on bringing a message to the federal Liberal government that "Pipelines need to be built. Bill C-69 and 48 are obviously a problem. And (so is), the carbon tax," said one of the organizers, Jason Corbeil, referencing federal legislation seeking to change the environmental review process for energy projects and ban oil tankers from British Columbia's north coast.

You could hear the honking of the horns of the big rigs that ferried protesters to Ottawa as part of the convoy, which organizers said brought about 200 vehicles downtown.



Andrew Scheer address the United We Roll protesters on Parlaiment Hill. (Credit: Bruce Deachman) PHOTO BY BRUCE DEACHMAN /Postmedia

Among the speakers at the rally were former Ontario MPP Jack MacLaren and current Saskatchewan Sen. David Tkachuk. Tkachuk thanked them for rolling all the way to Ottawa, and urged them on the return trip to roll over every remaining Liberal. “Because when they’re gone, all these bills are gone,” he said.

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The horns largely drowned out the group of about 40 counter-protesters who assembled on Wellington Street.



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When asked where truckers are going, Gatien said: “I do know but for security reasons cannot say quite yet.”

The protest on Parliament Hill is expected to jam up traffic downtown for two days.

OPP East Region
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On your drive home this afternoon, the United We Roll convoy may interrupt the normal flow of traffic. If specific delays become known, the OPP will employ its own social media channels to update the public. Travelling public is advised to check ahead ^cs



1:40 PM · Feb 19, 2019 

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The convoy was on the outskirts of Ottawa around 9:20 a.m., said Gatien, who'd been with the convoy, confirmed its arrival at 9:40 a.m.

The convoy had earlier planned to leave Arnprior at 7 a.m. which would have put the trucks rolling into town in the middle of rush hour after the hour-long drive.

Off to the hill! We Thankyou for the support along the way. Our little convoy carries a big message. Canadia has it all, from food to energy to technology, made up of a several cultures. We love ca. We dislike the division caused by Trudeau! Unite Canada! #unitedweroll

— United We Roll. Convoy for Canada ca (@unitedconvoy) February 19, 2019

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Protesters planned to park 200 vehicles in streets surrounding Parliament Hill and meet thousands of other people in front of the House of Commons, said head organizer Glen Carritt.

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Voices from the convoy: Why they came

The convoy was delayed on its trip from Alberta, he said. “Everywhere we go there’s people on overpasses, side of the road,” said Carritt, a town councillor in Innisfail, Alta. He spoke with this newspaper by phone Monday while travelling with the convoy, and loud honks punctuated most of the call. “Everybody wants us to stop.”

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'We're tired, we're mad, we're ready to get even.'



Prepare to see Wellington Street packed with Alberta-plated trucks and closed to traffic Tuesday and Wednesday as the United We Roll pro-oil protest convenes on the Hill.

Ottawa police notified the public last week that Wellington Street would be closed between Kent and Elgin streets from 8 a.m. “until as late as after the afternoon rush hour both days.”

Organizer Jason Corbeil said demonstrations would be held on the lawn of Parliament between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tuesday, and 11 a.m. and mid-afternoon Wednesday.

“Commuters should expect delays as alternate routes will be heavier than usual. Avoid travelling by car into the downtown core. Consider walking, biking or telecommuting, if you can. If you are travelling downtown, allow for additional travel time,” Ottawa police said.

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OC Transpo and Para Transpo were also expecting delays in the downtown core because of the protest.

The East Region OPP warned motorists that the convoy “may periodically delay or interrupt the normal flow of traffic on area highways and arterial roads,” and said police were working with those involved “to minimize the impact on the travelling public and to ensure order and public safety.”

Some Ottawa cyclists were using the protest as an opportunity to promote cycling. Several cyclists, including city councillor Shawn Menard, tweeted #unitedweroll as they set out for a carbon-free commute that won’t leave them sitting in snarled downtown traffic.



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Trucks in the United We Roll convoy left Red Deer, Alta. on Feb. 14.

They were protesting to support the building of pipelines and against the carbon tax and federal legislation seeking to change the environmental review process for energy projects and ban oil tankers from British Columbia's north coast.

The latest downturn in Alberta's oilpatch has left workers hurting, Corbeil said, many of whom had moved from across Canada hoping to get ahead by doing this work. Now, they're struggling, and the federal Liberal government's carbon tax and pipeline inertia aren't doing anything to help, he said.

"We're about to show a country that we can unite and stand together against a government that isn't listening to us."

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But Corbeil also acknowledged that United We Roll is a big tent group that welcomes people from different places protesting different causes.

Coverage from the road shows Make Canada Great Again and Yellow Vests messaging alongside the pro-oil signage. That is stoking fears that United We Roll is bringing Trump-esque populism, far-right extremism, and anti-immigrant sentiment to a very public stage — namely the country's highways and the lawn of its house of government, with amplification by media coverage.

Kelly Elliott 
@kellyelliottmcm · [Follow](#)



The **#UnitedWeRoll** convoy is not about the energy sector anymore. Although the grassroots of the convoy was legitimate, it has snowballed into a hate-fueled group of racism travelling across our country. To see **@AndrewScheer**, **@fordnation** + others cheering is sickening. **#cdnpoli**

Andrew Scheer  @AndrewScheer

The #UnitedWeRoll convoy is a testament to the importance of Canada's energy sector and the crisis it's facing. Canadian energy workers deserve a government that supports their industry and champions it worldwide. Conservatives will fix the Liberal mess & get people back to work.

7:12 AM · Feb 19, 2019 from Thames Centre, Ontario



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The Canadian Anti-Hate Network pointed out in a news release that United We Roll evolved out of an original convoy organized by the Yellow Vests, a Canadian version of the French “gilets jaunes” anti-fuel tax movement that “has been entirely co-opted by the far-right including most extreme anti-Muslim groups in Canada,” the network said.

While United We Roll has formally split from the Yellow Vests, some of its members have joined the convoy, Corbeil acknowledged. “If I tell them, ‘If you’re a yellow vest, you can’t join,’ is that really getting

our message that we want to unite everyone? No.”

Corbeil said they will be parked along Wellington Street, elsewhere nearby, if parking is available, and further afield, with protesters busing in. The United We Roll website lists the Holiday Inn Kanata on its convoy hotel guide.

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